

**Prof. A. A. J. de 'Sigmund and
the International Society of Soil Science**

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By a letter of invitation, dated February 6, 1909, the, at that time, Royal Hungarian Geological Institute convened the First International Conference on Agrogeology that was held in Budapest from 14th to 24th of April, 1909. Among the invited and contributing 90 scientists, representing a dozen countries we find the name of Professor ALEXIUS A. J. DE 'SIGMOND, who, conjointly with Professor STOKLASA presented a paper entitled "Über die Bedeutung der chemischen Bodenanalysen im Gebiete der agrogeologischen Forschungen und der Bodenkartierung". Already one year later the Second International Conference took place in Stockholm in 1910 and again 'SIGMOND contributed by giving a lecture "Über die Grundfragen in der Zubereitung der Bodenlösungen für die chemische Analyse".

At that occasion the International Commission on Chemical Soil Analysis was established, 'SIGMOND being charged with its presidency. This commission met in München on April 23 and 24, 1914, where a draft was made of the programme of future activities. All this was disrupted, however, by the events of history. The First World War intervened and it took 12 years before the connections between the various nationalities were restored and the Third Conference started on April 19, 1922 at Prague, Tschechoslovakia, with 59 participants residing in 17 countries. 'SIGMOND, perhaps without being conscious of it, already did see the need that would give rise in 1924 to the founding of the International Society of Soil Science.

In fact he participated in a preliminary meeting of the International Soils Committee, resulting from the Prague Conference. With my predecessor, Dr. HISSINK as the Secretary-General, this was held in Zürich in June 1923. Next to drafting the programme of the Fourth International Conference on Agrogeology (Rome 1924), the foundation was laid for an International Society of Soil Science. In his formal address at the Rome conference 'SIGMOND, as the official Hungarian delegate, mentioned the fact that six permanent commissions had been created which could operate as specific units during this conference. On May 19, 1924 the proposed Rules of the I.S.S.S. were discussed, adopted and the Society was founded. The six commissions mentioned before were officially established.

Prof. 'SIGMOND was elected President of Commission II, Soil Chemistry. During the Fourth International Conference on Agrogeology in Rome, 1924, 'SIGMOND's wide interest was shown through his contribution both in Commission I, Soil Physics on "Neuere Erfahrungen über einige physikalische

Bodenbestimmungsmethoden" and in Commission II "Beziehungen der sogenannten künstlichen Zeolithe mit dem Basenaustausch und den physikalischen Eigenschaften der Alkaliböden", and a second one "Zusammenfassender Bericht und Vorschlag für eine einfache konventionelle Methode zur Bereitung des konzentrierten Salzsäureauszuges".

In 1926 Commission II met in Groningen, Netherlands, and again this untiring worker read a paper on exchange phenomena "Einige vergleichende Untersuchungen über die Bestimmung der austauschfähigen Kationen, Sättigungszustand und Aziditätsverhältnisse im Boden". At that time he ranked high among the participants.

The First International Congress of our Society took place in Washington, D.C., U.S.A. June 13—22, 1927.

'SIGMOND reported on the activities of Commission II since the Rome Conference and he presented two papers on Soil Chemistry, dealing with leaching and soil extracts. More interesting perhaps is the first study of alkaline and saline soils at least as far as Proceedings of the I.S.S.S. are concerned. One of the resolutions adopted by the 1st Congress of Soil Science (Washington, June 1927) met the new demand and established the Alkali Subcommittee, and 'SIGMOND was elected its first chairman, a post held until his death.

The final stamp put on this first international congress during which his scientific presence was felt so clearly, was his basic contribution on the "General principles for surveying the salty and alkali soils".

The period 1927—1939 presented further proof of his untiring and inspiring activity. In July 1929, Commission II met in Budapest conjointly with the Alkali Subcommittee, again with a strong participation of Hungarian soil scientists, Prof. 'SIGMOND and Dr. BALLENEGGER being the editors of the Transactions.

At this occasion 'SIGMOND published a bibliography on alkali soils counting no less than 757 publications of which no less than 64 had been written by him, the first dating from 1900: „Az alkáli talajokról" (On the alkali soils).

At the Second International Congress of Soil Science held in Moscow in 1930, his outstanding position was confirmed by his re-election as President of Commission II and of the Alkali Subcommittee. In the years when he regularly contributed to international soil science in the periodical of the Society "Soil Research" he developed a system of soil classification which was also a major contribution during the last international congress in which he participated, in Oxford, in 1935. In recognition of his outstanding achievements the Oxford Congress nominated 'SIGMOND Hon. Member of the I.S.S.S. and Hon. President of Commission II. This was an indication of his greatness as a soil scientist of international stature.

Only a few more years were allowed him to work in the field that had his attention over such a long period. In 1937 in Vienna he participated in a meeting of Commission V delivering a paper on the principles of soil sampling, while his last contribution was presented at the meeting of the Alkali Subcommittee in Helsinki, July 1938, on the classification of alkali soils. Probably his health then already failed him as this paper was read by Dr. ZUCKER.

Prof. Dr. ALEXIUS A. J. DE 'SIGMOND was a soil scientist of international fame and a beloved member of and a leader within the I.S.S.S.